Navigating Difficult Conversations

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I am originally from LA and was raised in “The Valley”. I am the oldest of two girls. We grew up with all four grandparents visiting our home everyday! I am married with two nearly-grown children. My husband is a Russian historian who is originally from Minnesota. We have a Doberman named Heidi who was born in London.
What Makes a Conversation “Difficult”?

A Toxic Brew

• Differing Perceptions
• Assumptions of Intent
• Impassioned Feelings
• Desire to Blame
Getting to a Successful Outcome

10 tips on how to be heard and still have people like you.

“We don’t get harmony when everybody sings the same note. Only notes that are different can harmonize. The same is true with people.” – Steve Goodier
Tip #1
Don’t Avoid It

- Bad feelings will fester if not addressed
- Practice makes perfect
Tip #2
Prepare

- Take time to clarify your thoughts
- Assume the best
- Be thoughtful about the time and location for the conversation
Tip #3
Make it Safe to Talk

- Embrace a mutual purpose
- Model respect
- Use contrasting statements
Tip #4
Listen

- Listen because you care
- Ask open-ended questions
- Paraphrase for clarity
- Acknowledge feelings
Tip #5
Use “Yes, and...”

- Validates both views of the conversation
- Two conflicting things can be true at once.
- Works only if you master Tip #4
Tip #6
Separate Intent from Impact

- Assess what stories you are bringing to the interaction
- YOUR ASSUMPTION IS A GUESS
- State your assumption knowing it is open to revision
Tip #7
Use “I” Statements

- Sentences that start with “you” sound accusatory and can put others on the defensive
- Speak only for yourself
Tip #8
Attempt a Solution

- Determine if solution is possible or required
- Incorporate ideas and opinions already stated
- If tensions become inflamed again, stop to level-set on purpose
Tip #9
Follow Up

✓ Check-in on the other person after your conversation
✓ Offer another time to talk if tempers have cooled
✓ How can you both be better next time?
Tip #10

What would you add?

Use the chat box to share some of your own best practices.
Your Turn

Q & A and Sharing
How to Start...

Let’s practice and crowdsourcing a few opening lines...
➢ I have something I’d like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.

➢ I’d like to get your perspective on what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

➢ I need your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, “Sure, let me get back to you,” follow up with them.

➢ I think we have different perceptions about _______________. I’d like to hear your thinking on this.

➢ I’d like to talk to you about ___________. I think we may have different ideas about how to ____________.

➢ I’d like to see if we might reach a better understanding about ___________. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.

➢ YOUR TURN! Please write in the chat how you have opened difficult conversations.
You did it!
Resources


How to Have a Respectful Conversation About Racial Justice, AARP

Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict, by Judy Ringer
The Magic of Conflict, by Thomas F. Crum

Difficult Conversations, by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen

Crucial Conversations, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

FAQs about Conflict, by Judy Ringer
Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.

-Marie Curie